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ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women

Note by the Secretariat pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/160

I. BACKGROUND

1. In a note submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1993 (E/1993/82), the Secretary-General transmitted to the Council a proposal for the merger of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The proposal, based on a recommendation made by the high-level panel of advisers on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the Organization, which was endorsed by the Secretary-General, was elaborated by a Task Force established by the Secretary-General, 1/ following discussion in the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW.

2. In its decision 1993/235 of 27 July 1993 the Economic and Social Council took note with appreciation of the note by the Secretary-General and agreed that the recommendation to merge INSTRAW and UNIFEM in pursuance of a stronger, more unified programme for the advancement of women could proceed, subject to the recommendations set out in paragraph 13 of the report, in particular the need for a proper analysis of the legal, financial and administrative implications of the merger, and subject to consideration by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

3. Pursuant to that decision, the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session a report providing an analysis of the implications of the proposal (A/48/591). In that report, the Secretary-General emphasized that the proposed merger did not imply a fusion of the two programmes. Rather, it involved streamlined arrangements which would place the two entities under a single management and reporting mechanism in New York, while, at the same time, maintaining and taking maximum advantage of the characteristics of the two programmes, including a continuing presence of UNIFEM/INSTRAW in Santo Domingo, where INSTRAW is presently located.

4. In its resolution 48/111 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1994, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a report on the proposed merger, including an analysis of the financial benefits resulting from the merger; an estimate of the costs of the merger; details of the current staffing structure of the two entities, as well as details of the proposed new structure, including reporting arrangements; staffing implications; a report on consultations with the host Government of INSTRAW; and consideration of potential duplication of the training activities of the two entities.

5. The report of the Secretary-General prepared pursuant to this request (A/49/217-E/1994/103), and the comments thereon of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/49/365-E/1994/119), were reviewed by the Economic and Social Council at its resumed substantive session of 1993 on 3 and 4 November 1994 and by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

6. In its resolution 49/160 of 23 December 1994, the General Assembly, acting also on the recommendation of the resumed substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, as contained in its resolution 1994/51 of 3 November 1994, requested the Secretary-General to submit an updated report to the Economic and Social Council at a resumed session, through the Advisory Committee, containing, inter alia, the information requested in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Assembly resolution 48/111 (see paragraphs 8 and 9 below), as well as the additional information requested by the Advisory Committee. The Economic and Social Council was requested to re-examine the issue, and the Assembly decided to take a final decision on the proposed merger at its fiftieth session in the light of the Council's recommendations, taking into account the deliberations of the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-ninth session and of the Fourth World Conference on Women concerning the institutional arrangements in the United Nations system for the advancement of women. The Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fiftieth session on the implementation of the resolution.

7. The present document has been prepared pursuant to the above requests of the General Assembly. The reports of the Commission on the Status of Women on its thirty-ninth session 2/ and of the Fourth World Conference on Women 3/ have been issued.

8. In paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 48/111, the Assembly urged that interaction between INSTRAW and UNIFEM, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the Commission on the Status of Women and the

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women be reviewed and rationalized within the context of ongoing efforts to revitalize the Economic and Social Council in pursuance of a stronger, more unified programme for the advancement of women. The report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Conference (A/50/744), address the responsibilities to be carried out by the above-mentioned entities and intergovernmental bodies in the aftermath of the Conference. The Secretary-General hopes that the actions to be taken by the Assembly on the recommendations of the Conference will serve to further the objectives outlined in paragraph 2 of Assembly resolution 48/111.

9. With regard to the information requested in paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 48/111, it will be recalled that the financial benefits resulting from the merger were outlined in paragraph 25 of document A/49/217-E/1994/103. Estimates of the one-time, non-recurrent costs of the merger, including costs of transitional measures, as well as an estimate of the recurrent costs of the merger, were contained in paragraph 36; details of the current staffing structure of UNIFEM and of INSTRAW, together with details of the proposed structure, including reporting arrangements, were provided in paragraphs 17 to 29; and information on staffing implications was provided in paragraphs 29 to 33 of the same document. Discussions with the host Government of INSTRAW were discussed in paragraphs 9 to 14 of the document.

10. Since no new elements have emerged that would justify revisions of the financial and staffing information provided in the above-mentioned document, the present note is confined to the additional information requested by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED BY THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY QUESTIONS

11. Commenting on the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/217-E/1994/103), the Advisory Committee considered that the report did not describe clearly the purpose and advantages of the proposed merger (A/49/365-E/1994/119, para. 6). The purpose and substantive advantages of the proposed merger were set out in detail in the note by the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council (E/1993/82). The Council, in its decision 1993/235, concurred, subject to the recommendations set out in paragraph 13 of the report of the Task Force on INSTRAW and UNIFEM, in particular the need for a proper analysis of the legal, financial and administrative implications of the merger. The Secretary-General reiterated the purpose and advantages of the proposed merger, and addressed the various recommendations contained in paragraph 13 of the report, in his subsequent report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session (A/48/591). In acting on that report, in its resolution 48/111, the General Assembly focused its request for further information on specific items relating to the "legal, financial and administrative implications of the merger", in addition to raising the issue of duplication of training activities. Accordingly, in the preparation of document A/49/217-E/1994/103, the Secretary-General concentrated on those specific requests, bearing in mind that the purpose and advantages of the proposed merger had been set out in the earlier documents referred to above.

12. In paragraph 6 of its report the Advisory Committee also stated that the report of the Secretary-General did not provide a clear analysis of the financial benefits resulting from the merger.

> "A net savings of $605,500 ... reflects, in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, only a short-term effect of the merger and does not necessarily indicate that this proposed administrative merger will be financially beneficial in a longer-term perspective."

In the same paragraph, the Advisory Committee stated that it was not indicated how any savings would be utilized to strengthen research and training programmes.

13. Although the primary purpose of the proposed merger was not financial, but substantive and programmatic, i.e. to generate synergies between the two programmes and to strengthen the overall impact of programmes for the advancement of women, the savings in management and support costs of $605,500, anticipated under the new organizational structure proposed by the Secretary-General, would be available to supplement resources available for research and training, i.e. redeployed from administrative to substantive programmes. These involve recurrent costs, and thus do not represent one-time savings. As indicated in annex III to document A/49/217-E/1994/103, under the proposed new organizational framework, there would be a net increase of 23 per cent in the total INSTRAW resources to be devoted to substantive research and training activities. The specific additional research and training programmes to be financed through these savings, both in the short and longer term, would of course be matters for the appropriate governing body to determine.

14. With regard to the comment by the Advisory Committee regarding cost comparisons between New York and Santo Domingo and "the relative advantages and disadvantages of the two locations", it should be recalled that the report of the Secretary-General compared the cost of delivering the 1994-1995 INSTRAW programme, as approved by the Board of Trustees, in Santo Domingo, with the cost of delivering the same programme as part of a consolidated organizational structure managed out of New York. The assumptions regarding the location of various activities utilized in document A/49/217-E/1994/103 were based on the organizational framework recommended by the Task Force and elaborated in the subsequent report submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

15. In addition to financial/administrative advantages resulting from savings in support costs, programmatic benefits expected from the relocation of activities were summarized in paragraph 10 of the report of the Task Force as follows:

> "A relocation to New York will bring INSTRAW into the hub of United Nations activities, thereby providing more opportunities for consultations and collaboration. INSTRAW will also have more immediate worldwide access to institutions and universities engaged in research on women, thus facilitating both its information collection and dissemination activities as well as networking initiatives. It is not unreasonable to expect that

the fund-raising ability of the Institute would be enhanced as a result of the foregoing" (E/1993/82, annex, para. 10).

16. With regard to the comments by the Advisory Committee seeking explanations on the rationale for estimating reimbursement to UNDP and the share of common costs, it should be noted that the rationale for estimating reimbursement for services to UNDP at 3.75 per cent was based on the experience of UNDP with respect to such costs, as incurred by other small funds (e.g. the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration, the United Nations Fund for Science, Technology and Energy and the United Nations Capital Development Fund). As far as common costs are concerned, the principle applied was that the costs of management, administration and information activities should be shared proportionately between the resources of UNIFEM and those of INSTRAW, taking into account the costs that those activities represent for UNIFEM.

17. In its report, the Advisory Committee also seeks additional justification and explanation on the type of activities that would be conducted in Santo Domingo.

18. It should be clarified that, under the proposal of the Secretary-General referred to above, research activities would be undertaken in New York, with existing capacities in this respect being supplemented by utilizing the expected savings. It is similarly envisaged that the development of training materials would be undertaken in New York, building on related activities of UNIFEM and other New York-based entities. The facilities in Santo Domingo, for their part, would host various decentralized, regional and interregional group training activities funded from the resources of UNIFEM, INSTRAW and other United Nations organizations. Under the Secretary-General's proposal, the facility in Santo Domingo would have the capacity to provide logistical support for group training, including printing and dissemination of documents and reports, as well as provide administrative assistance to participants. As stated in paragraph 33 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/217-E/1994/103) "a progressive expansion of the [training] facility may be envisaged, through reimbursements to be received for services rendered for UNIFEM-funded and other United Nations system training activities to be hosted by the facility".

19. The report of the Advisory Committee also refers to the need for further analysis of the short- and long-term effects of the merger on programme delivery of both INSTRAW and UNIFEM. The mandate of INSTRAW calls for two sets of substantive activities: (a) action-oriented research and (b) training, focused on the development of training materials. UNIFEM funds operational projects. The impact of the proposed merger on substantive programme delivery of UNIFEM and INSTRAW, and the expected benefits of the merger, were summarized in paragraph 10 of the report of the Task Force as follows:

> "... the mandates of the two organizations complement each other and dovetail very well; a unified strategy would also eliminate duplication. On the one hand, merger with UNIFEM would enable INSTRAW to keep its finger on the pulse of the research needs of operational activities for the advancement of women. On the other hand, UNIFEM would have ready access to research outputs that can be adapted and applied at both the policy and grass-roots levels. A closer relationship should have the desirable effect

of a more coherent approach to addressing problems of women in the developing world" (E/1993/82, annex, para. 10).

It is thus expected that the synergies to be achieved would have a beneficial effect on programme delivery of both INSTRAW and UNIFEM.

20. In its report, the Advisory Committee also questions the cost-effectiveness of INSTRAW operating in two locations. The cost-effectiveness of relocating INSTRAW to New York has been addressed above, by reference to the estimated savings in recurrent support and management costs to be redeployed to substantive activities, as well as the substantive synergies to be achieved. The proposed training facility in Santo Domingo could be utilized on a cost-effective basis, as indicated, by a variety of organizations, including INSTRAW and UNIFEM.

21. In paragraph 10 of its report, the Advisory Committee states:

"Since the report of the Secretary-General does not provide a detailed description of responsibilities of staff of the two entities after the proposed merger, the Advisory Committee is not in a position to share at this stage the notion reflected in paragraph 16 of the report, namely, that 'linkages and commonalities between the two programmes, and coordination between them, would be reinforced'."

The functions of the staff in both UNIFEM and INSTRAW would remain basically unchanged except for those of the Director, whose responsibilities would include management of both the UNIFEM and the INSTRAW programmes, and the staff of the Communications and External Relations Section and the Management Services Section, who would provide support, in their respective areas of competence, for both UNIFEM and INSTRAW activities. The "reinforcement" of linkages would occur as a result of both programmes being overseen simultaneously by a single manager and reviewed together by the same governing body and intergovernmental organs, as well as working together in a common location, which, as indicated earlier, affords the possibility of additional synergies with the Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations departments and programmes responsible for overall economic and social policy and operational activities for development.

Notes

1/ The Task Force was chaired by the Executive Director of UNFPA and composed of two members of the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW and two members of the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM, with the assistance of the Directors of the two entities and representatives of UNDP and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat.

2/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 6 (E/1995/26).

3/ A/CONF.177/20.